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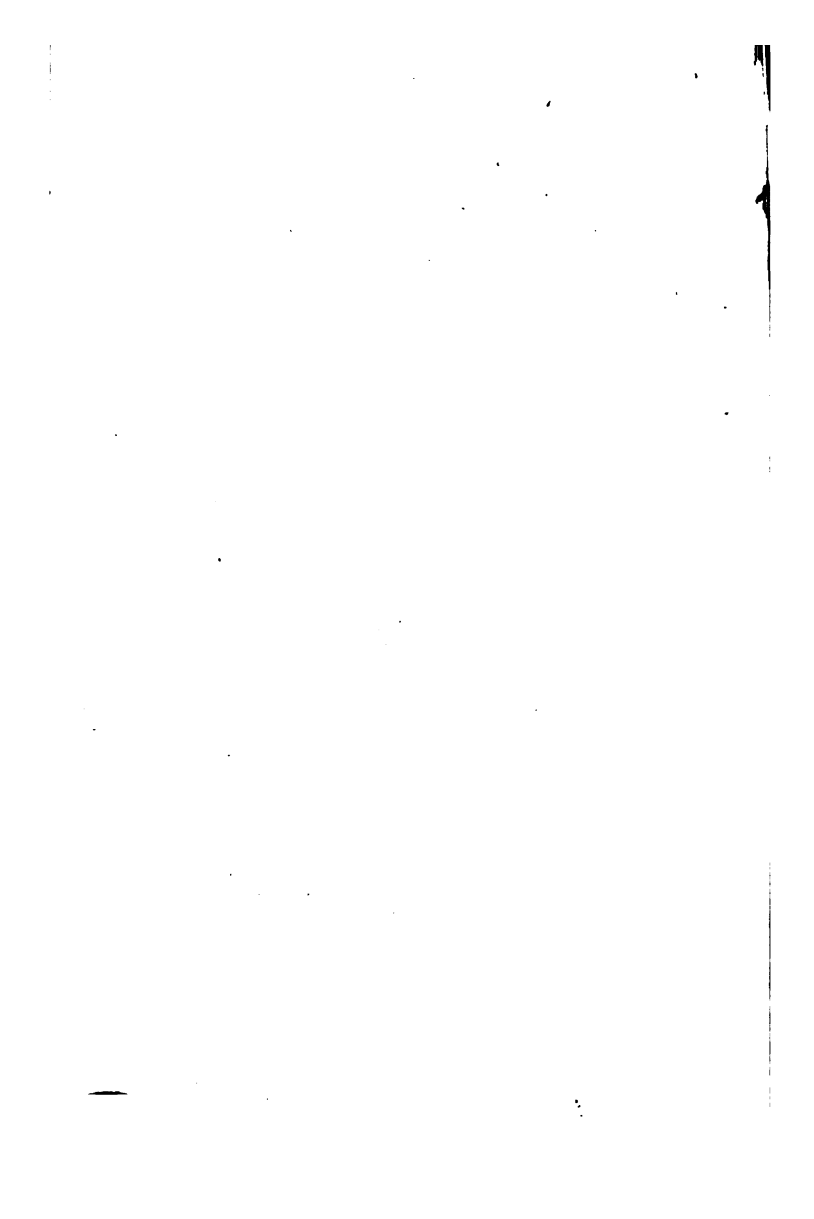


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# EPOCHS OF ENGLISH HISTORY

EDITED BY THE

REV. M. CREIGHTON, M.A.

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EPOCHS OF ENGLISH HISTORY

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# ENGLAND A CONTINENTAL POWER

*FROM THE CONQUEST TO MAGNA CHARTA*

1066—1216

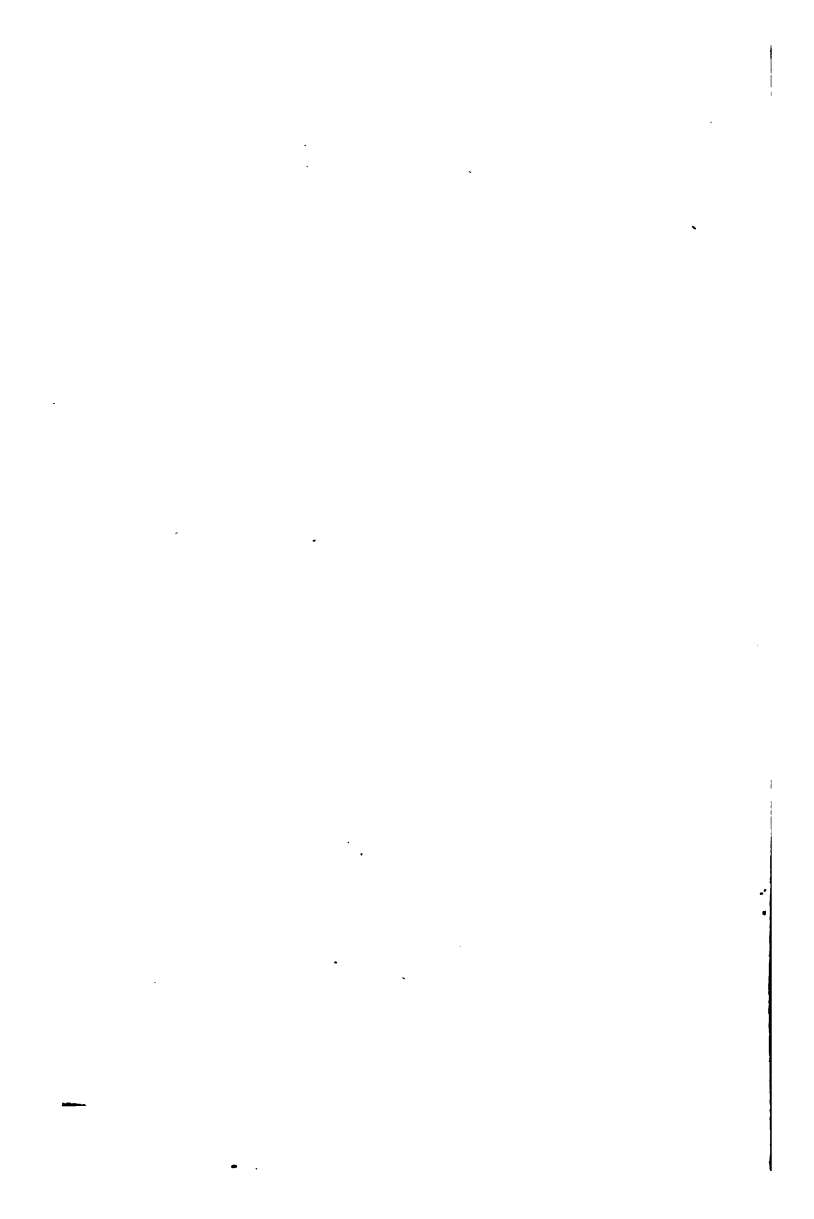
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WITH A MAP

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(1066-1087).

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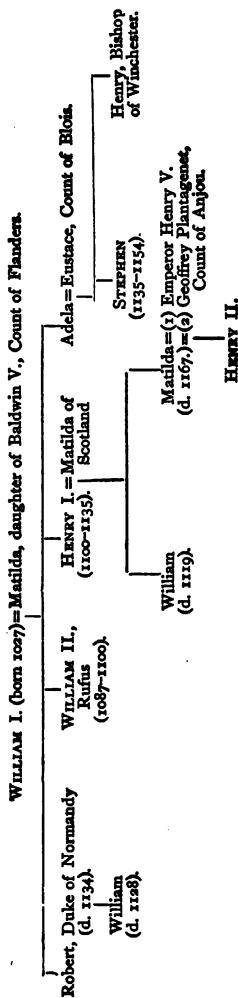
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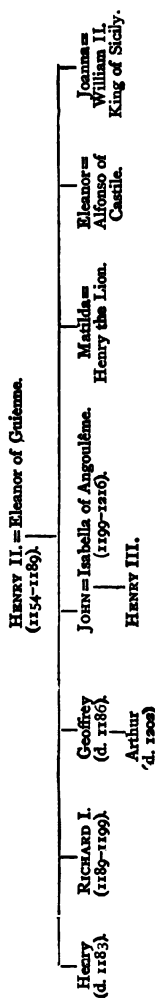
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# ENGLAND

## A CONTINENTAL POWER.



### INTRODUCTION.

DURING the years which we are going to talk about England went through great changes. She grew very powerful, and gained a strong government, and order was made to reign in the land. To see how this came about we shall have to notice—

Important  
points in  
this epoch.

1. *What the Norman Conquest did for England.*—We shall see that much good came to England from the Normans, even though at first they treated the people hardly and cruelly. They gave the English new life; and the Norman kings, though harsh and stern, loved order and good government, and knew how to make wise laws.

2. *How the Conqueror and his sons kept the Barons from gaining too great power.*—This is a very important point. It shows us why the history of England and the history of France are so different. In France the

barons were almost as powerful as the king himself, and treated the people very harshly; but in England the barons were not allowed to grow too powerful, and when in after-times they wanted to go against the king they had to get the help of the people, and so they had to treat the people as friends.

3. *How the English and Normans became one people.*

—The Normans did not drive out the English, as the English had driven out the Britons, but they mixed with them and became one people, and what was good and strong in them made the English people greater and stronger than they had been before.

4. *How the kings made order and good government in the land.*—The Norman kings did not make sudden changes in the government of the land. They made use of what seemed to them good in the English customs and laws; but they brought in many new ways of government, for they knew more about law than the English did. They ordered things wisely and firmly, and began to build up our present laws and ways of government on the old foundation, on which they have slowly risen since that time.

5. *What steps the people made towards governing themselves.*—At first sight it will seem as if the people themselves had very little power, and as if the kings had things all their own way. But we shall see that the Norman kings had to keep up the old English forms of freedom. At first these were only forms, but in time the people grew stronger, and learnt how to make them something more. The people grew so strong that when King John tried to govern badly and treat them unjustly, they were able to make him promise them good government. He had to sign the Great Charter, to which Englishmen have always looked back as one of the great steps in the growth of their liberties.

## BOOK 1.

*WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.*

## CHAPTER I.

## SETTLEMENT AFTER THE CONQUEST.

1. WILLIAM, Duke of Normandy, had won the battle of Hastings, but still he did not wish to come before the English as a conqueror. He claimed to be the rightful heir of Edward the Confessor, and he thought that now that Harold was dead, the English would crowd to his camp and hail him as their king. But no one came. The chief of the English met in London and chose for their king Edgar the Atheling, the grandson of Edmund Ironside, who was a mere boy.

2. William did not march direct on London. He wanted to give the English time to feel their weakness, that they might own him for their king themselves. He marched by the great cities of Dover, Winchester, and Canterbury, and made them submit to him, so that London stood alone. London was very helpless, for the great Earls of the Marchland and of Northumberland, Edwin and Morcar, had gone away to their earldoms, and there was no strong man left in the city. At last the chief men came out, and Edgar the Atheling with them, and met William at Berkhamstead. They bent humble knees to him and

begged him to be their king. So William accepted the crown, and promised to be their loving lord.

3. William entered London as the chosen king of the English. On Christmas-day he was crowned in the Abbey at Westminster by the Archbishop of York. When the Archbishop turned to the crowd gathered in the Abbey and asked whether they would have William for their king, they shouted 'Yea, yea, King William!' So loud was their shouting, that the Norman soldiers who stood outside thought they meant some evil, and set fire to the houses round the Abbey. The English rushed out to save their homes, and none were left within but William and the trembling bishops. In haste and fear the crowning was finished. Meanwhile there was fighting and bloodshed between the Normans and English when William most wished for peace.

Though William was now the crowned king of the English, very little of the land was really in his power. He had only subdued the South-eastern shires. But little by little the English from other parts came to bow before him and own him for their king, and the great Earls Edwin and Morcar came with the rest. He let all those who submitted to him take back from his hands their lands and possessions. But he seized the lands of all those who had fallen in the battle of Hastings, for he looked upon them as traitors who had fought against their rightful king. He gave these lands as rewards to his own Norman followers.

4. Only three months after he had been crowned, he felt so sure of his position that he dared to leave England and go back to his own duchy of Normandy.

William  
visits

Normandy.

He wanted to show his people his new power and to fetch his wife, whom he dearly loved.

He took with him some of the chief of the English, so



that he might be sure they did no mischief whilst he was away, and he took much spoil of gold and silver and gorgeous robes. The Normans wondered and rejoiced when they saw these things, for the English had much gold and silver, and knew how to work it very cleverly. The English women too were very skilful with their needle, and William brought home much of their beautiful embroidery, which he gave to the churches and monasteries in Normandy.

5. But whilst William was away troubles began to arise in England. He had left his most trusted friend William FitzOsborne and his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, to rule in his name. Risings of the English. They treated the people harshly, and made them hate the Norman rule, so that everywhere risings against William were planned.

In 1067 William had to come back to put down these risings. We shall see that in his reign he had three great struggles before he could make his power really strong : (1) the struggle with the native English, (2) the struggle with his own Norman barons, who wanted more power than he would give them, (3) the struggle against his own sons, who rebelled against him.

Till 1071 William had to struggle against the English. They gave him a great deal of trouble, but they could not really put his power in danger, for they had no union amongst themselves, and fought with no plan.

6. In 1069 Swend, King of Denmark, sent a mighty fleet under his brother to help the English. Swend was nephew of the great Canute. Many of those who had fallen at the battle of Hastings were his kinsmen, and he wished to revenge their death. But William bribed the Danish commanders, and the fleet sailed away without striking a blow. William and the Danes.

7. Then William marched northwards to put down a great rising in Northumberland. He wished to frighten the English, so as to teach them not to rise against him again. To do this he laid waste the whole of the north of England. The houses and all that was in them, the stores of corn, even the living animals, were burnt. The whole land was left desolate. Many of the people died of hunger, whilst some sold themselves as slaves, that they might get bread. For nine years the land remained untilled. It was a terrible deed, and men said that the wrath of God was sure to follow upon it. But the north never dared to rise against William again.

Harrying of  
Northum-  
berland.

8. One by one the risings all over the country were put down. The man who gave William most trouble was Hereward, a great chieftain, who fortified himself on an island in the fens near Ely, so that none could get near him. Many of the English took refuge with him, amongst others Earl Morcar. At last William had to make a great causeway of stones and trees and hides over the fens to get at Hereward. Then Morcar and the others surrendered, but Hereward escaped, and many strange stories are told of his after life, but we know nothing more with certainty about him. Morcar was kept in prison till his death. Malcolm, king of Scotland, tried to help the English several times. Edgar the Atheling and many others fled to his court. At last in 1072 William marched over the border and made Malcolm submit to him.

Hereward.

9. In many of the towns which he took William built great castles, in which he put soldiers to watch over the citizens, lest they should rise against him. In London he built the Tower, which has always been famous in English history. He took away the lands of all the English who rose against him, and

William's  
castles.

he gave them to his Norman followers, so that by degrees the lordship of nearly all the land passed out of English into Norman hands.

10. Now, all the men who got lands from William held them in the *feudal* way. Lands held in this way were called *fiefs*, and their holders had to make certain promises to the lord who gave them these fiefs. They were called his vassals, or tenants, from the French word *tenir*, meaning to hold, and the lord was called their superior. The vassals were bound to follow their lord to war, and to pay him certain services, whilst he in return took them under his protection and defended them against their enemies. When land was granted to the vassal by his lord he had to do *homage* to him for it. That means he became his man, from the French word *homme*, which means man. The vassal knelt before his lord, and, putting his hands between his, swore to be his man for life and death, so God help him. When he died his son had to do the same homage, and then his father's lands were given him by his lord.

11. These feudal customs had been growing up all over Europe, in England as well as in other countries; but they had grown more quickly in France and Normandy than in England, and William had there seen what they came to at last. There the vassals might give away part of their lands to their followers, who then were their men and not the king's men, and had not to do homage to the king at all. The great vassals of the king, too, had their own courts, where they judged their own vassals and laid on taxes at their pleasure. In this way the great vassals grew very powerful and did not care much for their lord, to whom little more than the tie of homage bound them. They were called *tenants in chief*, because they held their lands directly from the

Feudalism.

Feudalism  
in France.

king. In this way William himself, as Duke of Normandy, was a vassal of the King of France, and had to do him homage.

12. William did not wish things to become like this in England. He wanted to have one strong government, which should rule the land. He wished all William and feudalism. the law courts to depend upon himself. He let the barons hold the land in the feudal way, because it seemed to him the best and simplest way, and the old English ways had not been at all simple. But in other ways he tried to prevent his barons from gaining as much power as the barons had gained in France.

(1.) He made every holder of land, and not only the tenants in chief, take the oath of obedience to him and become his man.

(2.) He let no man hold much land together. If he gave a man many lands he gave them to him in different counties, so that he might not form one strong power. Canute had divided the country into great earldoms, but William broke these up. He made very few earls, and governed the counties by the sheriffs, whom he chose himself, and who could not leave their office to their sons. He only made four great earldoms, where the earls were allowed to have all the royal rights and name their own sheriffs.

These were Chester and Shropshire, which were to defend the border from the Welsh; Durham, to keep off the Scots; and Kent, where the coast had to be defended from foreign invaders. But Kent and Durham he gave to bishops, who might not marry, and so could not found great families.

(3.) He did not let the courts of justice of the barons become too powerful. The barons had courts of law for each of their *manors*, as their estates were called; but as William took care that their estates should be far

from one another they could not set up one strong central court.

Now, the barons did not like all this at all. They had never loved William's rule. They had followed him to England because they hoped to get more lands and more power. They thought that they would rise in power as much as William had done; and when they found that he would not let them become great and powerful, like the barons in France, they grew discontented and seized every opportunity to resist his power.

13. At last two of the great Norman barons made a plot, into which they tried to draw Waltheof, Earl of Northampton, the last of the English earls. They agreed to divide England amongst themselves, and that two of them should be dukes and one king. But Waltheof's heart failed him, and he told all that they had plotted. This did not save him, and he was beheaded as a traitor. The English mourned much for him, for he was a good man and gave much to the poor, and they revered him as a saint and as the last of their great earls.

Struggle  
with the  
rebellious  
barons, 1075.

Another time the discontented barons in Normandy made William's own son, Robert, rebel against him. Robert wanted to have the Duchy of Normandy for his own, even in his father's lifetime; but his father would not part with it. In time the barons gathered round Robert, who took up arms against his father. He found a friend, too, in the king of France, who feared the power of his great vassal William.

After a while the tears and prayers of Queen Matilda, who loved both husband and son very dearly, brought about peace between them. But it lasted only for a time, and Robert's rebellions and disobedience were the trouble of his father's last years.

William had to spend much time during his reign in

his lands in France. He had most difficulty with the province of Maine, which did not like his rule. His neighbour, Fulk, Count of Anjou, made plots to get it from him. There was always great enmity between the Angevins, as the people of Anjou were called, and the Normans, and we shall see the results of this enmity later on, when a king of Angevin blood came to rule over England.

William's absences in Normandy were not very good for the people of England. We have seen how the rule of Odo of Bayeux made the English discontented in the first year after the Conquest. It was worse even in 1082. Odo wished to be made Pope, and for this end he tried to get money in every possible way. He oppressed the poor and spoiled the Church. When William heard of this he was much angered. He came back to England and seized Odo with his own hands, for no other man dared lay hands upon him, because he was a bishop. He had him carried to prison at Rouen, where he stayed till the Conqueror's death.

William was too strong for all his enemies. They only struggled against him that they might gain more power each for himself, and had no common object for which all would have fought ; so they could do nothing against William's power.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### WILLIAM'S GOVERNMENT.

1. ALL this time William had only one trusted friend and adviser. This was the man whom he had made Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc, an Italian. William and Lanfranc. Lanfranc was one of the greatest scholars of his day, full of zeal both for religion and learning. He

had gone to live in peace away from the world at the humble monastery of Bec, in Normandy. But he was too great a man to be left quiet. The fame of his learning drew many to Bec, and a great school gathered round him, so that Bec grew rich and famous. Then William learnt to know Lanfranc, and soon saw his greatness. He saw that whilst he was as strong as a Norman, he had all the learning and cunning wisdom of an Italian. He made him his friend and adviser, and trusted him with all his plans. When he built the great Abbey of St. Stephen's at Caen, he made Lanfranc its abbot; and when, soon after the Conquest, he had to choose a new Archbishop of Canterbury, his first thought was of Lanfranc.

When William planned the Conquest of England, he spoke much of his wish to reform the English Church. The Pope encouraged his plans, for great disorder had crept into the English Church, which cared little for the words of the Pope. Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had not, they said, been rightly elected according to the rules of the Church, so William put him aside, and bade Lanfranc come to fill the office.

2. Lanfranc came to England and threw himself heart and soul into the Conqueror's work there. The two men had the same aims, and they worked together to bring them about. The change brought William and the Pope. the English Church much closer to Rome; still neither William nor Lanfranc allowed the Pope to interfere too much in English matters.

The Popes at that time were seeking to get more and more power in all the countries of Europe. They claimed greater powers for the Papacy than had ever been claimed before. This was mainly the work of one man, Hildebrand, who, after being the intimate friend and councillor of several popes, at last became Pope himself, as

**Gregory VII.** He and the Conqueror were the two greatest men in Europe, and Gregory soon found that William was as strong as himself. William treated the Pope with great respect, but he meant to rule his own Church, and he would not let Gregory interfere in Church matters in England without his consent.

In all this Lanfranc agreed with William, but neither of them would allow disorder in the Church. By degrees they turned most of the English bishops out of their sees and filled up their places with Normans. Most of the new bishops were wise and good men, scholars chosen by Lanfranc for their learning and piety. Norman abbots also, were placed over many of the abbeys; but this did not work so well, for the abbeys were full of English monks, who did not like to have a foreigner set over them.

3. The greatest change which William and Lanfranc made was that they allowed the bishops and archdeacons to hold law courts of their own, in which they might judge all cases which had to do with the clergy or the law of the Church. Before the Conquest the bishop had sat with the sheriff in the court of the shire, and had helped him to do justice. Now the bishops had courts of their own, and no longer sat in the county courts. In the bishops' courts they did justice according to the *Canons*—that is, the law of the Church—not by the common law of the land. This worked very well at first, when king and archbishop were of the same mind; but it had great evils, which showed themselves, as we shall see, in after-years, when the Church tried to take too much upon herself.

Lanfranc's zeal in spiritual matters gave new life to religion in England. New orders of monks were brought in, and many new monasteries were built. On all sides, too, new and beautiful churches began to rise, for the



Normans were well skilled in building. Their churches were strong and massive, with bold ornaments, and much of their work remains in England to this day. Great part of many of the English cathedrals was built by the Normans, and so were many parish churches. The finest of their churches is the great cathedral of Durham.

4. During the last eleven years of his reign William had no foe to fear in England. He kept strict peace throughout the land. It was said that in his day a man might go through the country with his bosom full of gold and no one would dare to rob him ; neither did any man dare slay another, even though he had done him great evil.

5. Still the Conqueror's hand was very heavy upon the people. Love of money was the great sin laid to his charge by the men of his time, and many and severe were the taxes he laid on the land. He raised the same sums as the English kings before him had raised from the royal estates ; and besides this he made the people pay the *Danegeld* again, which Edward the Confessor had done away with.

6. The *Danegeld* was an old English tax which had been raised in times of danger from the attacks of the Danes. It was paid by all the holders of cultivated land for the defence of their country. William raised the tax, as it had often been raised before, when there was no question of an attack from the Danes, and he made it three times as great as it had ever been before.

But besides the old English ways of getting money William used the Norman ways too. These were feudal *aids*, that is moneys which the great vassals were bound to pay their lord on fixed occasions, as on the marriage of his eldest daughter and the knighting of his eldest son. The barons could only raise these moneys from the people

who depended on them and worked on their lands; and so all these heavy burdens fell upon the poor, and no class was left untaxed.

7. William's great love for hunting also brought much trouble upon the people. To make a good forest to hunt in, he laid waste one of the most fertile parts of England, from Winchester to the seacoast, 17,000 acres of land. It was called the New Forest, and has kept its name till this day. He made a law that whoever killed a hart or a hind should be blinded. 'He forbade killing the deer and the boars, the old English chronicle tells us: 'he loved the tall stags as if he were their father. The rich complained and the poor murmured, but he was so stark that he recked nought of them; they must will all what the king willed, if they would live.'

8. That he might better know the state of the country, and how much money and how many men-at-arms he might raise from it, William sent officers to enquire into the condition of each county. They caused to come before them the chief landowners of each county and representatives from the hundreds and towns, who were called *jurors*, because of the solemn oath they took to speak nothing but the truth. These jurors told the names of all the manors and towns in the county; how many freemen there were and how many serfs; how much meadow, wood, and pasture, how many mills, what kinds of fisheries, and what was the value of each holding of land. All that they told was carefully written down by the king's officers, and when it was all put together the record was called the *Domesday Book*; for men said it was so complete that it would last till the day of doom or judgment.

We can easily see how useful the Domesday Book was to William, for it told him exactly the state of the

country, how rich it was and how it was cultivated, and so he learnt to know what he might get out of it. To all after-times also the Domesday Book has been of great use and interest. We can learn all about the England of the Conqueror's time from it, what the people grew in the fields, and how they lived; from it any landowner may learn who held his land in those days, and in what state it was. The whole was done carefully and well, as William had everything done about him, for he liked no half-measures.

9. William had no wish to vex the people by many changes in the government. He showed great wisdom in making use of the best parts of both the Norman and the English customs. The great strength of the English system lay in the way in which the whole country was bound together in one government by the different courts, the shire moots and the hundred moots, of which you have heard in the early English history. The strength of the Norman system lay in the close ties which bound the great vassals to the king. So William kept what was good in both, and this made his government very strong.

English and  
Norman  
customs  
mixed.

He kept up all the forms of the old English government, and confirmed the laws which had been in use in the days of King Edward the Confessor. It was this that made the English people bear patiently with his rule. They felt that from the lawlessness of the barons they would have nothing to gain, and they saw that William's enemies were their enemies. After the last risings of the English had been crushed in 1071, they never tried again to take away the crown from their Norman king. All the after-troubles in the Conqueror's reign and in the reigns of his sons came from the discontent of the Norman barons, and not from the English people at all.

It was his stern love of order and the strict obedience which he made the people pay to his laws, but most of all his heavy taxes, that made William's rule so harsh. We have said that he kept up the old forms of government; but they were little more than forms, for his will was law, and no man might go against it. But he did not wish one thing one day and another the next, like a tyrant. He ruled himself as well as other men, and his rule was wise as well as strong.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### WILLIAM I. AND HIS SONS.

1. IN body William was as strong as in mind. He was of middle height, with a fierce countenance. Men trembled at his look when he was angry. His forehead was bare of hair. Whether he was standing or sitting his look was kingly. So great was his strength of arm, that when his horse was at full gallop he could draw a bow which no other man could draw standing on the ground. Till his death he never had any serious illness. He loved grandeur and magnificence. Three times a year he wore his crown at the three great cities of Gloucester, Winchester, and Westminster. Then he gathered round him all the great men in the land, and gave royal feasts and showed his power and his wealth to the ambassadors who came from foreign lands. Then he was affable and bountiful to all, that men might say he was as generous as he was rich. But as a rule he was a hard man, and it is not wonderful that men should have looked upon him with fear and wonder rather than with love. The one tender side of his character that we read of is his love to his

William I.'s  
person and  
character.

queen. They seem to have loved and trusted one another perfectly all through their lives, and when she died he caused a rich tomb of gold and gems to be put over her grave at Caen, and mourned for her till his death.

2. In his last years William grew very stout, so that he was quite deformed by his great size. He heard that the King of France made jests at his figure, and he swore to be revenged for this jest.

William I.'s  
death and  
burial.

In the month of August, when the corn was ripe upon the ground and the orchards and vines hung heavy with fruit, he entered France. To revenge an idle jest he laid the whole country waste, and so made the people suffer for their king's fault. He set fire to the city of Mantes; but whilst he was looking with joy at the flames, his horse trod on a burning ember and stumbled. William was thrown heavily forward against the saddle and was so severely hurt that he was carried away to Rouen only to die.

On his deathbed he said that his son Robert must have Normandy, since he had promised it to him; but he gave it to him sadly, for he knew that he was proud and foolish and would not rule the duchy well. He hoped that William, his second son, would have England. He did not name him; he said that as he had won the kingdom by the sword, he dared leave it to no one but to the disposal of God. Then he thought of his sins, of his harshness to the English, of the lands he had burnt and plundered, of the vast numbers he had slain by hunger or the sword. To atone for his sins he left his treasures to the poor and to the churches in his lands. He gave orders that all prisoners should be allowed to go free, even his brother Odo of Bayeux.

He dictated a letter to Lanfranc telling him what he wished about the government of England, and gave it to his son William, who started on his way to England even

before his father's death. To his youngest son, Henry he gave money from his hoard and bade him be patient and trust in the Lord and let his elders go before. At last one morning, as the bell rang for prime, he stretched out his hands in prayer and his soul passed away. He was, says the English chronicler, a 'very wise man and very great, and more worshipful and stronger than any of those who went before him.'

As he lay ill, the enemies of peace had rejoiced, thinking that now they would be able to seize on the goods of other men at their pleasure; but those who loved peace were filled with dread. In truth the strong man was no sooner dead than those who had stood around his bed rushed to their own homes to save their goods from the plunderers. In the royal chamber everything was carried off, clothes, vessels, and furniture; and the body of the great man who had been so feared during his lifetime, was left alone and wellnigh bare on the floor of the chamber. Not a man of his household came forward to bury him: each man thought only of himself. At last a humble Norman knight, at his own expense, took the body by water to Caen, and there it was buried in the Conqueror's great abbey of St. Stephen's.

3. The barons both in England and Normandy would have liked to have for their king Robert, the Conqueror's eldest son. But William the Red, as the second son was called, from the colour of his hair, had a powerful friend in Lanfranc. William was ready to do anything to get the crown; and as the barons were against him he threw himself upon the support of the English. He swore to Lanfranc that he would rule with justice and mercy, would care for the Church, and follow his advice in all things. So Lanfranc crowned him king, and his promises of good government bound the English people to him.

William the  
Red chosen  
King of  
England.

The barons still clung to Robert, and it took much fighting, both in England and Normandy, to put them down. Many of the great Norman barons in England lost their lands and liberty by rebellion. At last, like so many other men of his day, Robert grew eager to go to the East on the Crusade and fight to win back Christ's Sepulchre from the Saracens. He made peace with William, and left him his duchy during his absence in return for a large sum of money.

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## BOOK II.

### *THE NORMAN RULE.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### STRUGGLE BETWEEN KING AND CHURCH.

1. WILLIAM THE RED was, like his father, a strong man, who knew how to make himself obeyed, but he had not his father's virtues. As long as Lanfranc lived William II.'s he kept him in order, so that his vices did government. not show themselves. But to the great loss of the country, Lanfranc died less than two years after the Red King came to the throne. Then William showed himself in his true light—a man who feared neither God nor men, who gave way to all his passions, and openly scoffed at religion and virtue.

For his chief minister and adviser he chose Ranulf Flambard, a priest, an able and crafty man, who cared no more for virtue than the king himself. He used every means to get money for the king, who loved it as much as his father had done, and cared not how he got it 'In his days,' says the chronicler, 'all justice sank and

all unrighteousness arose.' When an abbot or a bishop died, the king and his minister did not choose one to fill his place, but drew all the rents for themselves and took all the money that belonged to the office.

After Lanfranc's death nearly four years passed and no new archbishop was named, till all men murmured. Even the rough barons at William's court asked him to fill the see. But he would not, till falling very sick he feared to die, and the thought of his many sins came to frighten him.

2. It chanced that at that time there was a holy man in the land, abbot of that same monastery of Bec from which Lanfranc had come, Anselm by name.

Anselm. He had been a friend of Lanfranc's, and was, like him, an Italian and a learned man. He had long been spoken of as the man who should be archbishop. So in his sickness the frightened king sent for him and told him that it was his will that he should fill the see of Canterbury. But Anselm had no wish for this honour. He was a simple monk, he said, and wished to live in peace—he had never mixed with the business of the world. The bystanders had to use force before they could make him take the cross in his hands, and it was against his will that he was made archbishop.

3. When the king got better of his sickness he forgo his vows to lead a new life, and behaved worse than before.

Anselm and William. But in Anselm he found a man bold enough to rebuke his crimes. When all the land trembled before the tyrant, the archbishop spoke out for the cause of liberty and good government. That the two should live in peace side by side was impossible. The King grew to hate Anselm and quarrelled with him, because he rebuked him for his vices, and because he would not give him the money he wanted. Moreover, there were at that time two Popes in Christendom, each



claiming to be the rightful one. Anselm had said that he would obey Urban II. as Pope, but William forbade him to look upon either as Pope till he allowed it.

4. At last William grew so bitter against him that Anselm had to leave the country and did not come back till the Red King's death. For twelve long years of misery William ruled over the land. The barons imitated his vices, and on all sides the people were oppressed. Ranulf Flambard found out ever new ways of burdening the country with taxes. Law was almost silent, and only money weighed with the Judges.

*William II.'s  
oppression.*

William loved hunting as much as his father had done, and his forest laws were very cruel. One day whilst hunting in the New Forest he was shot by an arrow and killed on the spot. Whether this was done by chance or on purpose was never known, and perhaps no man cared to ask, from joy that the tyrant was dead.

5. Henry, William's younger brother, was hunting with him when he was killed. Robert was still away on the Crusade, and Henry had himself chosen king by the few barons who were round William at his death.

*1100.  
Henry I.  
chosen king.*

6. But Henry knew well that the barons really wished Robert to be king, and so hastened to make himself sure of the people. At his crowning he swore to give the land peace, justice, and equity. Afterwards he gave the people a charter in which he promised to free the Church from all unjust burdens, and the land from all evil customs; he gave back to the people their old laws, and promised to reform all the abuses which had crept in during the Red King's reign.

*Henry I.'s  
charter.*

We must remember this charter, because it states very clearly for the first time the rights of the people.

It puts bounds to the power of the king by saying that the freedom of the people cannot lawfully be interfered with. It gave the people good hope that their troubles were at an end.

7. Henry had been born in England, and the English people joyfully welcomed him as in truth an English king. Still greater was their joy when he took for his wife an English maiden, Edith, daughter of Malcolm, King of Scotland, and Margaret, the sister of Edgar the Atheling. She took the name of Maude on her marriage, and her virtues made her very dear to the English people, who spoke of her as the 'good Queen Maude.'

Henry's  
marriage,  
1100.

8. One of Henry's first acts was to send for Anselm to come back. The archbishop came full of hope that now he might do something to reform the Church and the monasteries. Henry was willing to reform the Church, but he meant to keep the old customs that had been in force in his father's reign. He wanted the bishops and abbots to do him homage and be his men, as the laymen were; he meant himself to fill up the vacant posts in the Church and give the bishops and abbots the ring and the staff, the signs of their office. But Anselm had quite other views. He said that the election of the abbots and bishops belonged to the monks and chapters, that the clergy owed the king no homage, and that no layman could give the ring and the staff. On this point neither would give way, and so they quarrelled. Henry had the strong will of his father, and would give up none of his powers. Anselm felt that he was fighting for the liberty of the Church. He had seen how she had suffered from being quite in the king's power in the last reign.

It was the same quarrel that was then troubling all Europe, and is called the dispute about *investitures*

The point was whether it was the lay power or the Church which had the right to *invest* or clothe a man in the dignities of a spiritual office.

We need not follow out the quarrel between Anselm and Henry, which lasted for many years. For three years Anselm was banished from England, because he would not give way to the king. At last they came to an agreement by each side giving way a little. The important thing about the quarrel is that the Church was able to make so hard a fight against such a strong king as Henry, and in the end really made him give up something. This showed him that he could not always do just as he willed, and it taught the people, too, that they were not so much at the king's mercy as it seemed.

Anselm did not live quite three years after his return from exile, but during that time Henry listened to him when he spoke of the sorrows of the poor, and something was done to help them. Anselm was known all over Christendom for his learning and his piety. Men mourned much when he died, and in after days the Church made him one of her saints.

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## CHAPTER II.

### HOW THE NORMAN KINGS GOVERNED THE LAND.

1. HENRY I. was hardly crowned when Robert reached Normandy on his return from the Crusade. He listened to the barons, who urged him to try and take the English crown from his brother. The barons saw that Henry's rule would be strict, while they knew that Robert, though a brave soldier was weak and foolish. If they had Robert for their king they hoped to be able to have things more their

Struggle  
with Duke  
Robert.

own way. In the whole quarrel the barons looked only for their own gain and cared little for Robert, but the English held firmly by Henry. The fighting was mostly in Normandy, where at last Henry won the great battle of Tenchebrai (1106), and took Robert prisoner. Henry I. now ruled over both Normandy and England, and kept Robert in prison till his death.

2. Still he was not left undisturbed, for the King of France feared his power, and the barons were always discontented. Robert's son claimed Normandy, and the King of France fought for him; but he died young, and Henry had no other rival to fear. The wars in France really strengthened his power at home. He was able to seize the lands of those barons who rose against him, and in this way the descendants of many of the great men who had taken part in the Conquest lost their lands in England. Henry did not, as a rule, seize their lands in Normandy also. He was afraid that if he did so he would drive them to seek help from the King of France.

3. These struggles with the barons brought much good to the English people. Henry had to trust to their help, and, that he might be sure of it, he had to give them the good government which they wanted, and give them back the old laws and customs which they had had under Edward the Confessor. It is in this reign that we find the beginnings of English liberties. It was not that Henry loved his people; his aims were quite selfish. He wanted them to help him, and he was wise enough to take the right means to get them to do so. He began his reign by arresting Ranulf Flambard, William the Red's wicked minister, and this seemed to the people to promise good government. He made friends with the Church by filling up all the sees which William had left empty, and, except

Henry I.  
and the  
barons.

Henry I.  
and the  
people.

for his quarrel with Anselm, worked with the Church to do away with the abuses in the land.

4. Henry was a hard, selfish man, but fortunately for the people his interests were the same as theirs. He knew what he wanted, and he knew how to get it. He kept his aims clearly before him in all that he did. He wished to build up a strong power out of the firm union of England and Normandy. Men did not love him, but they feared and trusted him, for they could see and understand his aims. 'Great was the awe of him,' says the chronicler; 'no man durst illtreat another in his time : he made peace for men and deer.'

Henry I.'s  
character.

5. The Conqueror had loved order and made peace in the land. But time had tried his system and showed the points in which it failed, so that Henry could see where it would be well to make changes. In his plans for reform his chief adviser was Roger, Bishop of Salisbury. He was a very wise and able man, a Norman by birth, who had risen in Henry's service from being a poor clerk to be Bishop of Salisbury and chief minister of the king. In Henry I.'s time these ministers of the crown first grew up to help the king in all that he had to do.

Henry I.'s  
govern-  
ment.

6. The chief minister in those days was called the *Justiciar*. At first the Justiciar only existed when the king was away from England and some one had to take his place there. The Conqueror wanted no minister, for he liked to look after everything himself. But as the business of the government grew greater, some one was much oftener wanted to fill the king's place and look after things for him. Roger of Salisbury was Justiciar to the end of Henry's reign, and it is in his time that the Justiciar seems to have grown to be chief minister of the crown.

The  
Justiciar.

7. In later times the Justiciar became only a judge—the Lord Chief Justice, as he is now called. Most of his duties then fell upon the *Chancellor*, who was  
 The Chancellor. at first only the head of the royal chaplains, the priests in the king's service. They were the king's secretaries. He got his name from the screen—*cancelli*, as it is called in Latin—behind which he and the chaplains did their work. The Chancellor also became in time only a legal officer, but is still a minister of the crown.

8. The Treasurer was simply the keeper of the king's treasure, and had to look after the accounts.  
 The Treasurer. Still the office was important, and Roger of Salisbury got it for his nephew, the Bishop of Ely.

These were the chief men who did the business of the government for the king. They were generally clergymen, for the kings did not wish to give these offices to any of the great barons, for fear they should grow too strong and hand on the offices to their sons.

x 9. Most of the government was really in the king's own hands, though it was always said that he acted by the advice of his Great Council, the Witenagemot, as it had been called under the English kings. But it had changed its nature since the Conquest. It was now not a meeting of the Wise Men, but a court of the king's chief barons. It had only the forms of power; and though the king asked its advice, it does not seem to have dared to do more than agree to what he said. But by right it had the power to make laws, and it was important for the growth of English freedom that it kept even the forms of its rights; for when the people grew stronger they could make these forms real powers.

Besides the Great Council the king had two other courts, the *Exchequer* and the *Curia Regis*.

10. The Exchequer was the court which managed the accounts of the government and received the taxes. The Justiciar was the head of the court. The Chancellor and all the great officers of the king's household sat in it, and were called *Barons of the Exchequer*. The Exchequer got its name from the checked cloth which covered the table round which the barons sat. Its chief meetings were held twice a year, when the sheriffs came up from the counties with their accounts. Each sheriff had to bring up the money due to the crown from his county. This money came chiefly from the rents of the land belonging to the king in each county, and from the fines paid by offenders to the county courts. The sheriff agreed to pay the king for his dues a fixed sum, which was called the *Ferm* of the county. If he got more out of the county he kept it for himself, if less he had to make it up out of his own purse. Accounts between the sheriff and the Exchequer were kept on a long piece of stick, in which notches were made marking the pounds, shillings, and pence paid in by the sheriffs; the stick was then split in half, half was given to the sheriff, and half kept by the Exchequer.

11. The King's *revenue*, as the money which came in every year to the king was called, was made up of the following payments: 1. The *Ferm* of the counties, which has just been explained. 2. The *Danegeld*; this in time was done away with under that name, but the kings still laid a tax of much the same kind on the cultivated land. 3. The fines which had to be paid to the king by certain kinds of criminals, and the fees and other profits of the law courts. 4. The feudal aids. The vassals of the king had to pay him fixed sums when his eldest son was knighted, when his eldest daughter was married, and when their lands passed from one hand to another. 5. Henry I. got a great deal

of money by fining those who broke the forest laws and killed the king's game. These forest laws were so very harsh that they brought much suffering upon the people. All these different moneys were paid into the Exchequer, and made a very large revenue for the crown.

12. The Curia Regis was the King's Court, as its Latin name means, in which the king sat at the head of his barons to give justice. It acted as a sort of committee of the king's Great Council, as the Great Council did not meet often. The usual court, therefore, was made up of the officers of the royal household. The same men who were barons of the Exchequer also sat in the Curia Regis, and were then called Justices. If the king was not present at the meetings of the court, the Justiciar took his place and heard the cases for him. The business of this court was very great. It had to hear the cases of persons who had interfered with the king's interest; it had to settle the disputes of the chief vassals of the crown, and suits were brought up to it from the county courts which could not be settled there. Out of this court sprang, in the next century, the three courts of Westminster, which we still have: the Exchequer, King's Bench, and Common Pleas. Besides being a court for doing justice it was also an assembly of the King's advisers, and as such it still remains in the Privy Council.

The chief reason which led the Norman kings to order this court so carefully was because they found that it brought them in a great deal of money. They did justice very much because of the large profits made by the fines which the offenders had to pay. Henry, too, was wise enough to see that the country would be safer if justice were done in it, and so he would be able to tax it more easily. So we see that the Norman kings did not do



justice for the good of the people, but because they found it profitable and useful for themselves.

13. Henry I. felt as strongly as his father had done how necessary it was to keep the power of the barons from growing too great. He saw that the Con- queror had not gone far enough in this way. Circuit of  
the Justices. He went on to make it impossible for the barons to get strong powers of their own in the counties. He did this by connecting all the county courts with the Curia Regis. He sent his justices through the country *on circuit*, as it is called. They went first to fix what sums of money were due to the king. They sat in the shiremoot, the old English county court. At first they only had to look after money matters, but in time they sat as judges in the court as well, in the same way as our Judges do now when they go on circuit. Their circuits did not become very regular till the reign of Henry II., when we shall have to speak about them again.

The important thing to notice is how the whole country was bound together under one system. Through his justices the king could make his power felt in every part of the kingdom.

14. The county courts were much the same as they had been in the days of Edward the Confessor. They were presided over by the sheriff, who was chosen by the king, and who represented the king— The county  
courts. that is, stood in his place—in the county. Below them was the court of the hundred, which was a division of the county; and lastly came the manorial courts, the courts of the greater barons. These courts were all steps up to the Curia Regis, and were now all closely connected with it by the circuits of the justices.

So you see how orderly was the government of the Norman kings. The people were very safe under it, but they had to pay dearly for their safety. The taxes were

very heavy, and men often found it hard to pay them. The king's wars in Normandy cost large sums, and the English people had to pay for them. The chief object of the king in his government of England was to keep the people contented and get plenty of money out of them. In this he succeeded, for they never tried to go against him. But he had to give them the liberties, or forms of liberties, which afterwards helped them to govern themselves.

Character of  
the Norman  
rule.

This account of the Norman government may perhaps seem very dry and hard to understand. But it is not hard to see why it should interest every Englishman. It tells us about the way in which the government we now have came to exist. Our English constitution has grown up gradually and naturally out of the mixture of the old English and the Norman customs. We have traced how the Normans made use of the forms of government they found in the land: they added order and strength to what they found, and put new life into it by their great energy; so that the whole nation grew stronger through them.

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## BOOK III.

### *FEUDAL ANARCHY AND REFORM.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE BARONS IN POWER.

I. A GREAT sorrow came upon Henry I. The ship in which his son William was coming home from Nor-

mandy struck on a rock and sank, and all in it were lost. After this terrible blow, the story tells us, Henry never smiled again. William was his only son, to whom he had hoped to leave his strong power. The only child now left him was Matilda, who had been married to the Emperor Henry V., King of Germany. Henry I. hoped that she would succeed him, but in those days it seemed a strange thing that a woman should rule over the lawless barons.

Death of  
Prince  
William.  
1120.

Henry did all in his power to make her sure of the crown. He made all the barons and clergy swear to be faithful to her, and he married her after the emperor's death to Geoffrey of Anjou, the son of the man he most feared, Fulk, Count of Anjou. You will remember that the Counts of Anjou had always been foes of the Normans, and so the Norman barons hated this marriage.

2. When Henry died in Normandy, in 1135, all seemed uncertain. There was an end to the peace and order which the king loved, for the strong hand which kept the barons quiet was gone. No one remembered the oaths which they had sworn to Matilda. In the midst of the confusion Stephen, Count of Boulogne, son of the Conqueror's daughter, Adela, persuaded the English to choose him to be their king.

Stephen of  
Boulogne be-  
comes king.

Stephen was a brave soldier, very generous and affable, so that men readily loved him. He swore to give the land peace and good government, and all England took him for her king, whilst no one took up Matilda's cause.

3. Stephen was nothing but a soldier; he had no idea how to govern the country. All was disorder in the land. The barons built strong castles, and plundered the poor at their pleasure.

Stephen's  
misgovern-  
ment.

Stephen, who wished to make firm friends for himself,

made many new earls. He took no care, as the Norman kings before him had done, to keep the barons from growing too powerful. For once feudalism got the upper hand in England, and the disorder and suffering that followed showed how wise had been the government of the Conqueror and his sons. The clergy alone tried to make peace in the land. But Stephen managed to make them his enemies.

4. Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, the great minister of Henry I., had gone on being Justiciar under Stephen.

He, too, that he might be safe in those lawless times, had built and fortified castles. His nephews, who were bishops too, had done the same, and they came to court with long trains of servants as if they were princes. Stephen was afraid of such a powerful subject as Roger, so he seized him and made him give up his castles. This made the clergy very angry. Soon afterwards the Empress Matilda landed in England, and war began again. Even Stephen's brother Henry, Bishop of Winchester, a rich and powerful man, went over to Matilda's side, because Stephen had done wrong to the Church.

5. The disgrace of Bishop Roger put the whole country in disorder, for he alone had looked after the government. The laws were no longer carried out, and justice was not done in the land. For fourteen years there was war between Stephen and Matilda. First one side met with success, then the other. Once Stephen was taken prisoner, but was let go again in return for other prisoners. Once Matilda was so hard-pressed in Oxford by Stephen, that she had to flee over the frozen floods clad all in white, so that she might not be seen against the snow.

The barons fought first on one side, and then on the other. They did not care either for Stephen or Matilda,

Stephen's  
quarrel with  
the Church.

Civil war.

but only wanted to get power for themselves. The clergy spoke up for peace, but they were not strong enough to do much.

In the meanwhile the misery of the people was very great. One chronicler says: 'Some did what was right in their own eyes, but many did what they knew to be wrong all the more readily, now that the fear of the law and the king was taken away.' Another says: 'The barons greatly oppressed the wretched people by making them work at their castles. They took, by night and by day, those whom they thought to have any goods; seizing both men and women, they put them in prison for their gold and silver, and tortured them with pains unspeakable. Many thousands they killed with hunger. Then was corn dear, and cheese and butter, for there was none in the land. Wretched men died with hunger; some lived on alms who before were rich; some fled the country. Never was more misery, and never acted heathens worse than these. . . . Men said openly that Christ slept and his saints.'

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## CHAPTER II.

### SETTLEMENT OF THE DISORDER.

1. THE country at last wearied of the struggle, and there came to England a man who seemed fitted to bring it to an end. This was Matilda's son, Henry of Anjou, who had now grown to manhood. End of the war. Already he held many lands in France. His father's death had given him Anjou. From his mother he had Normandy, which Stephen had never been able to hold. He had married Eleanor of Guienne, the heiress of the county of Poitou and the great duchy of Guienne. In

this way he was lord of a greater part of France than was the French king himself.

Henry began by making war on Stephen. But the misery of the country stirred up the clergy to try and make peace. Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, was sincerely moved by a wish to help the people, and Henry Bishop of Winchester aided him in persuading Stephen and Henry to come to terms.

2. By the Peace of Wallingford it was agreed that Stephen should keep the crown as long as he lived, on condition that it went to Henry on his death. A plan of reform was also made, most likely by Henry, so that means might be taken to bring back order and lessen the people's sufferings. Stephen did not live to carry out this plan, and probably would have been too weak to do so. He died the year after the Peace of Wallingford, and the crown passed quietly to Henry.

3. With Henry II. came in a new race of kings—the Angevin Kings, as they were called, because of their descent from Geoffrey of Anjou. From Geoffrey too they got their surname of Plantagenet, because he had a habit of wearing in his hat a piece of broom called in Latin, *Planta Genista*.

Under the Angevin kings England made great progress. First of all Henry II. by his wisdom made her strong, for he knew how to make use of what the Norman kings had done, and how to make their work better. Afterwards the weakness and bad government of John did as much for the people as Henry II.'s wisdom had done, for it taught them their own strength, and led them to make it felt.

It was under these kings that England became one. She learnt to feel that she was one country, under one government. The Normans and the English too became

one people. They had married with one another, and very few families were still of pure Norman blood. Men no longer spoke of 'the Normans'; England becomes one. the two people shared the name of English. French was the language used at court; Latin was the language of law and learning, but English was the language of the great mass of the people. It was used too by poets, and the Norman Conquest did not stop the growth of English literature, though it made it slower for a time.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HENRY II. AND BECKET.

1. HENRY II. came to the throne of England quite peaceably. He came to it as king of the whole nation, not brought to it by any one party Henry II.'s difficulties. out of the nation. Amongst his own people he must know neither friend nor foe. To bring peace and order into the land was his first object.

This would have been a difficult task for a wise and experienced ruler, and the new king was only twenty-one years old. But he seems to have known by nature how to govern and make laws, and besides this he had the gift of knowing how to choose his ministers wisely, and how to get out of them the best work they could do.

2. Henry II. was a little above middle height, a stout man, with a short, thick neck, and quick eyes full of expression; his round head was covered with close-clipped reddish hair. He was a busy man, of active habits; he never sat down Henry's character and person. except at meals or on horseback. He was rough and passionate, a man of strong feelings, careless of his dress and appearance, though he liked his court to be magnifi-

cent. He cared little for religion, but whispered and scribbled at mass. He had a distinct aim in life, and kept to it steadily: this was to strengthen and bind together the vast dominions over which he ruled. To do this, he saw that, in the first place, he must govern England as an English king. His foreign possessions were much larger than England; but he hoped to keep them all together by wise alliances and marriages. Foreign affairs often called him away from England, and whilst he was away his ministers ruled the country in his place. But he himself was always the centre of all power. He remembered everything, he thought of everything, he cared for everything. When busy with foreign wars he found time to think of reforms in English law; nothing escaped his eye and his hand.

3. England welcomed Henry to the throne, because he promised to bring back order in the land. He gave the people a charter of liberties in which he confirmed all that Henry I. had granted, and he at once set about the work of reform. In this he was helped by Archbishop Theobald, and also by a young English clerk in Theobald's service, Thomas Becket. Thomas was tall and handsome, a man of ready wit, whom the king soon grew to like, and whom he made his Chancellor. The two became intimate friends, who joked and laughed together whilst they managed the business of the country.

In his first reforms Henry followed the plan which he had agreed upon with Stephen. He sent out of the country the foreign troops which Stephen had brought to England. He bade the barons destroy the castles, which they had built in the time of disorder. When some of them refused, he quickly led his troops against them and made them obey. Stephen had granted to



many of the barons parts of the royal lands. These now had to be all given back to the king.

The courts of justice began to work again. New sheriffs were put over most of the counties, and once more justice was done in the land. Under Henry's rule a staff of able men grew up, fitted to do justice and reform the laws. For the first ten years of the king's reign all went smoothly, and peace and order reigned in the land.

4. In all Henry's reforms Becket was at his right hand, and got rich rewards for his services, so that the Chancellor became one of the richest and most powerful men in England. Never, it <sup>Henry and Becket.</sup> was said, had the world seen two friends so thoroughly of one mind as Henry and Becket.

Once as they rode through the streets of London side by side on a cold winter's day, they met a beggar all in rags. 'Would it not be charity,' said the king, 'to give that fellow a cloak and cover him from the cold?' Becket agreed; so the king, in jest, plucked from Becket's shoulders, in spite of his struggles, his rich furred mantle, and threw it to the beggar. It was in this way that the two jested together like friends and equals.

Becket lived like a prince; every day he kept an open table, to which every man was welcome. His household was like that of a great baron, and the nobles sent their sons to be brought up as pages under his care, though he was only a merchant's son.

5. When Archbishop Theobald died, six years after Henry II. became king, all men spoke of Becket as the man to succeed him. Henry let a year pass, and then told Becket that he was to be the new archbishop. Becket warned the king that as archbishop he must put God before the king.

Becket  
made arch-  
bishop, 1162.

But Henry thought that by choosing the man whom he had raised from a humble rank in life and made his friend and favourite, he would get an archbishop who would obey his wishes, and so he would have the Church in his power.

For the same reasons the Church was afraid of having Becket for its head. The clergy thought that the king's friend would put the king's interest before theirs, and that they would have a primate whose mind was given up to the world.

6. But when Becket became archbishop he showed that he meant to live as one of the strictest of the clergy.

Becket's life as archbishop. He wore a haircloth next his skin, he fasted and prayed much, and at mass often melted into passionate tears. He gave very large sums to the poor, and every night he washed the feet of thirteen beggars. He no longer invited knights and barons but learned clerks to his table, and whilst they ate, grave Latin books were read aloud to them.

He gave up the Chancellorship, and in this way seemed to cut himself off from his old friendship with the king. Henry was not pleased; he had hoped to keep Becket as his minister, but now the archbishop seemed to mean to act by himself apart from the king. The two soon began to quarrel. Henry wanted to bring the Church under his rule, as he had brought everything else. Becket clung closely to the rights of the clergy. He would not allow clerks who had been guilty of crimes to be judged in the lay courts.

We have seen that the Conqueror had given the bishops courts of their own, and so had separated the Church law from the common law of the land. The evils of this were now seen. Many clerks who were guilty of crimes and many laymen who had harmed clerks were not punished at all. Henry wished to put a stop to this dis-

order by bringing them to trial before the king's courts. But Becket refused to lessen the power of the bishops' courts. Henry grew more and more angry with him, but could get him to agree to nothing.

7. At last, in January 1164, Henry bade all the bishops meet him at Clarendon. A list of the customs which Henry said the Church had observed in the time of his grandfather, Henry I., was then drawn up. This was called the Constitutions of Clarendon.

Constitu-  
tions of  
Clarendon.

They were much the same as the customs which the Conqueror had brought in. They said that bishops and abbots should be chosen before the king's officers, with the king's assent, and that they were to hold their lands like other feudal vassals and do homage to the king. They went on further to say that the king's court should decide whether a suit between a clerk and a layman should be judged in the Church court or the king's court. A royal officer was to be present in the Church courts to see that they did not go beyond their powers, and men might appeal from the archbishop's to the king's court.

At first Becket would not agree, but he stood alone. All the other bishops bent to the king's will, and at last they persuaded Becket to put his seal to the Constitutions.

The moment afterwards he repented. He wrote to the Pope to ask him to forgive him and free him from his oath.

8. Then the king's rage knew no bounds, and all Becket's enemies felt that the time was come when his power might be destroyed. He was bidden to appear before the king at a great council held at Northampton. There was no one on his side, and all kinds of charges were brought against him. In the midst of his enemies he showed his true courage and

Quarrel of  
Henry II.  
and Becket.

pride. As a sign that he looked for martyrdom, he came in carrying his cross himself, in spite of the other bishops, who tried to wrest it from him, before the king and all the bishops and barons sitting in council.

He forbade the bishops to sit in judgment on their primate, and said that he appealed to the judgment of the Pope. 'My person and my Church,' he said, 'I put under the protection of the Pope.'

He blamed the barons too for daring to sit in judgment on their spiritual father, saying, 'I am to be judged only under God by the Pope.'

Then he rose, and amid the murmurs of the crowd walked slowly down the hall. Some took up straws and threw them at him. One muttered 'Traitor.' 'Were it not for my order,' said Becket, fiercely, 'you should rue that word.' Outside the people greeted him with loud cheers, for they loved him for his charities.

9. So great was the anger of the king and the barons that Becket feared for his safety and even for his life.

Becket's flight. He fled in disguise that night, and after a journey full of hardships arrived in France. There he could make himself known, and was well received. The King of France, Lewis VII., hated Henry II., and was glad to be able to show honour to his enemy. The Pope was very much puzzled what to do; his own position was not very sure, and he owed much to the support of Henry II. He did not dare to go against so powerful a king.

For six years the quarrel went on, and Becket stayed in exile. Henry at last got into difficulties with his enemies in France. The Pope, too, had grown stronger, and threatened to excommunicate Henry—that is, to put him outside the communion of the Church—and this would have given the king's enemies new courage. So Henry was led to make a hasty peace with Becket, who

went back to England. The people greeted him with joy. But Becket's pride had not grown less in exile, and he could not come back to forgive and forget. His first thought was to punish the bishops who had opposed him by excommunicating them.

10. Henry was very angry when he heard what Becket had done. In one of his wild bursts of passion he cried out, 'Is there none of my thankless and cowardly courtiers who will free me from the insults of one lowborn and unruly priest?' He was in France at the time, and four knights on hearing his words hastened at once to Canterbury. At first they went to the archbishop in his chamber and spoke to him angry and violent words. But he defied them, and they rushed away shouting for their arms.

Becket's friends persuaded him to seek safety in the cathedral. There in the dim twilight the din of armed men was heard outside, and soon the four knights rushed into the church shouting, 'Where is the traitor?' 'Behold me,' answered Becket through the gloom, as he turned to meet them; 'no traitor, but a priest of God.' They tried to drag him from the church, for they feared to do violence in the holy place, but Becket clung to a pillar. In the struggle he even dashed one of them to the ground. But they quickly got the better of him. Kneeling on the steps that led to the choir, Becket cried, 'Lord receive my spirit.' Blow after blow fell upon him, and not till they were sure their work was done, did the murderers leave the place.

The news of this terrible outrage filled all Christendom with horror. Henry II. trembled at the storm that was raised, and he himself was filled with anger and horror at the deed which his passionate words had caused. Becket was hailed as a martyr and was made a saint, under the name of St. Thomas of Canterbury. He

soon became the most popular saint in England, for the common people had always loved him, and many miracles were said to be done at his tomb.

By his influence with the Pope and his readiness to humble himself in every way, Henry succeeded in getting the Pope's pardon. When next in England he made a solemn pilgrimage to the martyr's tomb, walking three miles with bare feet along the stony road. As he knelt at the tomb, he was scourged by the monks on his naked back as a sign of his penitence.

11. But it was not only sorrow for Becket's death that made the king humble himself so much. He wanted the help of the English against his enemies; and though the English liked their king, neither the clergy nor the people would help him heartily till he had repented of the murder he had caused.

Henry's enemies all chose the moment after Becket's murder to rise against him. His sons had long been discontented with him, because he did not give them enough power. It is true he had had his eldest son Henry crowned King of England. But he had soon shown him that he did not mean him to have any real power. Young Henry was so angry that he fled to Lewis VII., King of France, who was very glad to receive him.

12. And at this time, when he thought Henry would be very weak, Lewis invaded Normandy. Henry's younger sons, Richard and Geoffrey, took up arms against their father in Aquitaine. Meanwhile the King of Scotland entered the north of England with an army. The great barons rose in revolt in different parts of England. At the same moment all the different forces against which Henry II. had to struggle all his life rose against him.

These were (1) his rebellious sons, helped by the King

of France ; (2) the King of the Scots ; (3) the rebellious barons.

Henry's great energy saved him in this danger. The English people and his ministers were true to him. Hardly had he risen from his knees before the tomb of St. Thomas at Canterbury, when news came that Ranulf de Glanvil had surprised William the Lion, King of Scotland, in a mist, and had taken him prisoner at Alnwick. This seemed to the people a sign that the king's repentance had been accepted. His foes had no common cause, and were beaten one by one with wonderful speed. Henry was always moderate in his use of victory. But though he spared his enemies he never let them out of his hands till he had so weakened them that they could do nothing against him. After this revolt the barons lost still more of their power, and Henry was more powerful than he had been even at the beginning of his reign.

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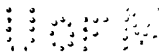
## CHAPTER IV.

### HENRY'S GOVERNMENT.

1. HENRY II. was a true lover of peace and never went to war if he could help it ; though when he had to do so he showed himself an excellent soldier. But it was by his wise measures more than anything else that he got a firm hold over all his possessions, and made himself the most powerful ruler in Europe.

When he had crushed his enemies Henry went back at once to his work of reforming the law. Henry's reforms in the law. Never in all his busy reign did he forget this.

2. Like his grandfather, Henry I., he sent his Justices through the country ; they were called *itinerant* from a



Latin word which means journeying from place to place.

**Itinerant Justices.** Henry II. divided the country into districts or *circuits*, places through which the judges should journey; and several judges were sent to go through each. They did not now go only to collect taxes, but they judged cases and heard pleas in the county courts. As the justices were members of the Curia Regis, their circuits brought the county courts into close connexion with the Curia Regis.

3. The greater importance of the itinerant justices naturally took away from the power of the sheriffs.

**Sheriffs.** Henry found that the sheriffs used their office to gain power and wealth for themselves. At one and the same time the king removed all the sheriffs from their offices, and then had an *inquest* or inquiry made into the way in which they had done their duties. The sheriffs do not seem to have met with great blame, but they did not get their places back again. Henry chose his new sheriffs from the officers of his Exchequer, men whom he knew and trusted. In this way the Curia Regis and the shires were brought still more closely together; and the barons, as they were now no longer sheriffs, lost much of their power in the shires.

These reforms all tended to make the country more and more one, for they made all the government centre round the Curia Regis, and let no independent powers grow up in the shires.

4. It is to Henry II.'s reforms that we owe the first clear beginnings of the English custom of trial by jury.

**Origin of juries.** Henry's law reforms were all put together into short codes, lists of rules, and orders, which he called *Assizes*, and which were given out at the councils which he held so often.

In one of these assizes he ordered that the sheriff should name four knights, who were to choose twelve



men out of their neighbourhood to give evidence on trials. These men swore to speak truth, and were, therefore, called *jurors*, from the Latin *juro*, 'I swear.'

Another assize ordered that the twelve jurors from each neighbourhood and four from each township were to bring to trial before the king's justices, when they came round, all in their neighbourhood who were thought guilty of any crime.

We see, therefore, that the jurors were at first witnesses more than anything else. But as time went on and it was found that the jurors often had not enough knowledge about the matter in question, they were allowed to call eyewitnesses, who had seen the thing themselves, to help them. So in time they came to fill the position which they do now, of deciding as to the truth of the matter from all that witnesses can tell them about it.

5. Henry had much need of soldiers for his foreign wars, and he made some important changes in the way in which he got armies together. Henry's  
armies.

6. You will remember that the feudal vassals of the crown had to bring their followers to aid the king in his wars. This was all very well for a war in England, but it was different for foreign wars, when men had to be taken out of the country for long and dangerous expeditions. In early English times the man who did not follow his king to war had to pay a fine. Henry now brought back this custom; but the payment of money instead of bearing arms, was no longer a punishment but a favour. The vassal who did not wish to go to war paid the king a fixed sum of money, according to the amount of land he possessed. This was called *scutage*, and with the money so raised Henry hired troops to fight his wars. Scutage. These troops were raised from different countries; at that time they

were mostly Flemings, from Flanders. Henry II.'s habit was to hire troops for his foreign wars, but to trust to the national force in England.

7. This national force was not a feudal force. In raising it Henry went back to the old custom by which every freeman was bound to serve for the defence of the country. The Assize of Arms of 1181 fixed the way in which each freeman was bound to arm himself when summoned by the king. This large force the king could use as he willed to defend his kingdom.

8. It will be well to notice how among all these changes made by Henry II. things were slowly moving on towards the government of England as it is now—by a Parliament which *represents* or *stands in the place of* the people, who have chosen it.

(1.) The king never made a change in the laws or did anything of importance without the advice of his Council. It is true that the Council seldom dared to oppose him, but still the fact remains that he held very many councils, and asked their advice on every point.

(2.) The jurymen were chosen out of their neighbourhood to stand in the place of their neighbourhood, and this accustomed the people to see a few men representing many. It was the same in the county courts, where each township was represented by four men.

(3.) The Itinerant Justices brought the county courts, or shiremoots, and the Curia Regis into close connexion. In the county courts there was representation, and the Curia Regis was part of the Great Council, by the advice of which the king governed. The bringing together of representatives of the counties and the towns to advise the king made in time our House of Commons.

The idea of representation—of one man standing for many—had been present in early English customs. It is

by carefully watching how this idea grew that we shall understand how the government of England as it now is came about.

9. It was in the towns at this time that the people were most quickly growing in wealth and prosperity. At the time of the Conquest the towns, like the rest of the county, had been under the rule of the sheriff. Little by little they made their way to independence. They were allowed to pay their taxes direct to the Exchequer, and not through the sheriff, and the sum of money demanded from them was called the *Firma Burgi*; the citizens were allowed to have their own magistrates and courts of law; their *Guilds* also were recognised by the king.

Growth of  
the English  
towns.

10. These guilds were in early times bodies of men bound together by oath for some common purpose, such as taking part in some religious service, and helping one another when in difficulties. As trade increased there grew up Merchant Guilds of all the merchants of the town, to watch over the interests of trade. These Merchant Guilds were now the chief body in the towns, and filled the same sort of place as the corporation filled afterwards. Craft Guilds also began to spring up, in which the members of any particular craft, such as weavers or goldsmiths, bound themselves together to watch over the interests of their craft, and allowed no man to practise it who was not a member of the guild.

Guilds.

11. The different privileges of the towns were given them by the king in form of charters, which were bought from him by the town with large sums of money. The poorer towns, which could not pay so much, could not buy such great privileges as the richer ones. The barons who had towns in their lands followed the king's example and sold charters to them. This was done very often at the time

Charters.

of the Crusades, when the barons wanted to raise as much money as they could to help them to go to the East. All over Europe many towns gained their liberties at that time.

Henry II. and his sons greatly favoured the growth of the towns, and did all they could for the good of trade and manufacture. As the towns grew richer they could tax them more and get more money out of them, whilst by granting charters they also got money. Henry was repaid for what he had done for the towns by the way in which they stood by him when the barons rebelled against him.

London was, of course, the largest and most important of the towns and had the greatest privileges. In the time of King John she obtained her *Communa*; that is, the right herself to elect the corporation or body of men who should govern her, with the mayor at their head.

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## BOOK IV

### *HENRY II. AND HIS SONS.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### LAST YEARS OF HENRY II.

1. HENRY II. loved his children dearly, but he did not know how to win their love. The last sixteen years of his life were made bitter to him by their constant revolts, in which their mother encouraged them. Whilst the elder ones rebelled against him he clung with all the more tenderness to the youngest, John. Many of the quarrels with the elder ones came from Henry's attempts to get lands and money for John's mar-

Conquest  
of Ireland.

riage-portion. For John's sake most likely he took in hand at last the conquest of Ireland, which he had long been planning, hoping that John might at least be King of Ireland. Besides this Ireland was in a very lawless condition, and needed a strong ruler.

2. Some few hundred years earlier, Ireland had been in a very much better state. In 432 St. Patrick had gone from Gaul and laboured amongst the Irish to make them Christians. This was more than <sup>State of</sup> ~~Ireland.~~ a hundred years before Augustine preached Christianity to the English. The Irish soon became very zealous Christians. Many churches, monasteries, and schools were founded all over the land, and arts and letters began to flourish. Foreigners came to study in the Irish schools, and Irish missionaries carried the Gospel into distant lands. They laboured in Northumbria, and they went even to Gaul and Germany.

But when the Northmen at last found their way to Ireland, they soon destroyed all the refinement and learning they found there. Ireland became again wild and barbarous. There were several kings ruling different parts of the land, and struggling together which should be the most powerful. But these kings had little real power even in their own kingdoms; the clan system was very strong in Ireland, and the different clans and their chieftains were always fighting together, and cared very little for their king. So there was nothing but disorder in the land. The Popes sent legates and missionaries, who tried to bring back order and reform the abuses of the Church; but it was of no good.

3. When Henry II. proposed that he should lead an army into the land and conquer it, and rule <sup>Henry II.</sup> ~~and Ireland.~~ the people well, the Pope made him a grant of Ireland, for he claimed in a strange way to be the lord of all islands.

For a long while Henry was too busy to trouble himself about Ireland. At last, in 1166, Dermot, an Irish king, who had been worsted in a struggle with a rival, came to Henry and asked to be allowed to get Englishmen to help him win back his power. Henry agreed, and love of adventure led many to go and help Dermot. Chief amongst these was Richard de Clare, surnamed Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke. He at last became so powerful in Ireland that Henry grew alarmed. But Strongbow hastened to Henry's court and promised to hold all his lands in Ireland as vassal of the English king.

It was soon after this, in 1171, that Henry himself went to Ireland. Perhaps he was glad to go there for a while and let men have time to forget Becket's death. He kept his court in a great wattled palace outside Dublin. He ordered castles to be built over the land, and made many of the Irish kings and chieftains submit to him. He also gave away lands to many of his followers. If he had been able to stay, he would doubtless have gained a firm hold over the country, but he left Ireland to meet the legates whom the Pope had sent to bring his pardon for Becket's murder.

4. Later on he sent John there to be overlord. But John did not know how to make friends of the Irish chieftains.

John  
in Ireland,  
1185. He laughed at their rough dresses, and pulled their long beards, with rude jests. He made so many enemies that he had to be called back to England. So far Henry's plans for John had not been very successful; but the English possessions in Ireland went on gradually increasing for the next two hundred years.

Death put an end to the plots of two of his other sons—Henry, who had been crowned King of England under his father, and Geoffrey, Duke of Brittany. Richard

still went on plotting against his father with Philip Augustus, King of France. At last they entered Maine, where Henry was, with an army, before which Henry had to fly; his flight filled England and all Europe with surprise.

The hand of death was upon the conquered king. The cup of his sorrow overflowed when he was shown in a list of the conspirators against him the name of his favourite son, John. 'Now,' he said, 'let things go as they will; I care no more for myself or for the world.' He was borne on a litter to Chinon, and as he lay dying there he cried out from time to time, 'Shame, shame on a conquered king!' At last he bade them carry him before the altar of the chapel, and his fiery soul passed away after he had taken the last sacraments of the Church.

Henry's  
death, 1189.

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## CHAPTER II.

### RICHARD I.

1. RICHARD succeeded his father without any difficulty, though Philip of France, his friend before, became his foe the moment his father's death made him King of England. His mother kept order for him in England whilst he settled matters with Philip. When he passed over to England, his one wish was to go on the Crusade, and with this object to raise as much money as he could.

Richard I.

Richard was very little in England either before or after he became king. We do not even know whether he could speak English. He was nothing but a soldier, with splendid tastes, a great love of fine clothes, and some feeling for poetry. But he had no care for his

people; all that he wanted was their money. He loved adventure and thirsted for the glory of victory. The fame of his brave deeds filled Christendom with wonder, and made the English proud of their king, though he cared nothing for them.

2. Fortunately for England he handed her over to the care of a number of wise ministers, who kept good peace and order, though they made the people pay dearly for it. Richard only stayed a few months in England and then started for the Crusade. He left William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, whom he made Chancellor and Justiciar, to rule England in his absence. Longchamp was faithful to Richard, but he taxed the people heavily, and the barons envied his power and wealth.

Whilst Richard was away, his brother John began to plot against him with the help of Philip of France. He got the barons on his side, and then took away Longchamp's offices from him and made him leave England. But new ministers were named, and the Queen-mother Eleanor managed to keep some order in the land.

3. Then news reached England that Richard on his way back from the Holy Land had been seized and thrown into prison by the Duke of Austria. A large ransom was asked for him, a sum far more than twice the whole revenue of the crown.

The money was got together in England with great difficulty, whilst Philip and John did all they could to destroy Richard's power now that he was in prison. 'The Devil is loose: take care of yourself,' Philip wrote to John when he heard that at last Richard was free. The Justiciar, Hubert Walter, who was also Archbishop of Canterbury, crushed John's revolt. Hubert Walter was an old servant of the court who had been trained under Henry II.'s ministers. He was faithful to the cause of order and good government, and Richard put great trust in him.

His minis-  
ters.

Richard's  
imprison-  
ment, 1192.



4. When Richard came back to England John was banished, and those who had rebelled were punished. The king did not stay long in England, but went to make war against Philip in France, and for the rest of his reign the government was left to Hubert Walter, who carefully worked out all Henry II.'s reforms. Richard was always sending for money, and Hubert Walter was forced to use every way that he lawfully could for getting money out of the people. England was kept very peaceful. A good many of the great barons were away with the king; those who stayed at home had now learnt that they must obey the laws and the government, for it was of no use to rebel.

5. Richard was busy in France making war on King Philip and punishing those of his subjects who had risen against him. The better to defend Normandy against the King of France, he began to build a great fortress on the Seine. It came to be called Chateau Gaillard, or Saucy Castle, and was one of the strongest and finest fortresses of the Middle Ages. As Richard saw its walls rise he cried with joy, 'How pretty a child is mine!' But Philip's anger was great, and he said, 'I will take it, were its walls of iron.' 'I will hold it,' answered Richard, 'were the walls of butter.'

6. Richard was always in want of money; and hearing that there was rich treasure in the Castle of Chaluz, he led his troops against it. But the castle was strong and would not fall. Richard rode round the walls in anger, and as he rode an arrow struck him in the shoulder. It was a fatal wound. The king lay dying while the castle was taken. He was always generous, and when the man who had shot the arrow was brought to his bedside, he forgave him.

So ended his quarrelsome and stormy life, which had little effect upon English history, since he was little in

England and left the government to his ministers. England was proud of his brave deeds, but he was in all ways a stranger to her, and she only felt his hand in the heavy taxes which burdened her.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### LOSS OF NORMANDY.

1. JOHN succeeded his brother without any difficulty. According to our ideas young Arthur of Brittany, the son of John's elder brother, Geoffrey, Duke of Brittany, was the rightful heir. But in England men knew nothing of him but his name, and no voice was raised for him.

2. We have seen how John deceived his father and betrayed his brother, and he had no idea of treating the English any better. The men of his time tell us nothing but evil of him. He had all the faults of his family and none of their virtues. Even his vices were mean. He is the worst of all the kings who have ruled over England—a man for whom we can feel no sympathy, even when he suffers most. Like Richard he loved money, but unlike him he was miserly and mean. He did not care for truth or honour, but tried to get on by cunning. He cared neither for law nor religion, though he was very superstitious. He was savage and violent, and punished his foes with horrible cruelty. Even to the ministers who served him well he showed no gratitude, but rather dislike.

3. He was kept at first from going far wrong in England by the Archbishop, Hubert Walter, who became Chancellor that he might the more easily keep John in order. Geoffrey Fitz-Peter

was Justiciar ; he too was a wise minister, who had been trained under Henry II., and knew how to care for law and order.

John's mother, Eleanor, was of great use to him. She was a very able woman ; and even now, though eighty years old, was full of activity and energy. She had not loved her husband, Henry II., and had quarrelled with him and brought much evil upon him. But she loved her sons and did much for them. She helped John to keep together all his possessions in France, which were attacked both by King Philip and by young Arthur of Brittany, who claimed some part of them.

4. John, with the help of his mother, got from Arthur the provinces which he claimed. When Arthur again took up arms, he was defeated by John and taken prisoner. He was carried to Rouen, <sup>Death of Arthur, 1203.</sup> and there mysteriously disappeared. Everyone believed that he had been murdered by the command of his uncle. This cruel act made the barons of Normandy and the neighbouring provinces all the more ready to turn away from John to Philip II. of France.

Philip II. had made it the aim of his life to strengthen the power of the Kings of France by humbling the great vassals of the crown. Now he seized his chance of striking a blow at the King of England, who, as Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, was the greatest and most dangerous of his vassals.

5. Philip's troops entered Normandy whilst Queen Eleanor lay dying. Even from her deathbed she wrote letters to the chief barons of Normandy, urging them to be faithful to her son. But <sup>Loss of Normandy, 1203.</sup> it was of no use. The barons were quite willing to welcome Philip. They had no feelings of loyalty to one who was of the house of Anjou, which had always been their enemy. John himself was not a man

to bind them closely round him. He did not even try to gather a force to lead against Philip. One by one the barons went over to Philip's side, and Normandy was lost without a struggle. It settled down quite peaceably to be a French province, for Philip had the wisdom to let it keep the customs and liberties which it most valued.

When John saw that Normandy was lost he fled to England, and there tried to get together an army to attack Philip, but nothing came of it. In the year 1204 England and Normandy were separated for ever.

The loss of Normandy did much to unite the English people. The Norman barons had to choose whether they would keep their lands in England or in Normandy. Those who stayed in England were quite cut off from Normandy, and this made them thorough Englishmen. The king, too, had to find his home only in England. He stood face to face with his people, and had no other power to fall back upon. He was not far above them, the ruler of a mighty empire, as Henry II. had been. They knew his strength, and then learnt to know their own too, and to feel in time that they could resist him if he went too far.

## BOOK V.

### *THE GREAT CHARTER.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### JOHN'S QUARREL WITH THE POPE.

1. KING JOHN had lost his mother before he lost Normandy. Not long afterwards, in 1205, he lost his wisest adviser, Hubert Walter. After Hubert's death there was a quarrel about the election of John and the Church.

of a new archbishop. The younger monks at Canterbury chose one man; John, on hearing this, made the elder ones choose another. Both these men hurried to the Pope at Rome with their claims. The Pope at that time, Innocent III., was perhaps the greatest and wisest Pope there has ever been. John thought he would get his own way by bribing the men who were to lay the case before the Pope. But Innocent was not a man against whom cunning was of any use. He put aside both the men who claimed to be archbishop and caused the monks of Canterbury to elect a third, Cardinal Stephen Langton. His choice was a wise one. Stephen Langton was an Englishman, and one of the first scholars of his day.

2. John's anger knew no bounds when he heard what the Pope had done. He said that he would never receive Langton as archbishop. Innocent used a terrible means to force him to submit. He laid <sup>The Interdict, 1208.</sup> the kingdom of England under an *Interdict*, which means that he forbade the clergy all through the land to do any of the services of the Church. Only the baptism of children was allowed, and that in private. The dead might not be buried in consecrated ground. The people suddenly lost all the help and comfort which they got from the clergy, and were left as sheep without shepherds. John was filled with fury. He answered by seizing the lands of the clergy who obeyed the interdict. He treated the clergy as his enemies, and allowed those who robbed or murdered them to go unpunished.

He did all he could to show men that the Pope might do his worst—he would not care; and all the while the people suffered for his obstinacy. At last five of the bishops fled out of the country, and loud murmurs of discontent were heard amongst the people. To make sure of the barons John took the children of many of them and kept them as hostages, so that if their fathers

rebelled he could punish them by making their children suffer.

3. After two years the Pope went farther and *excommunicated* John; that is, he put him out of the communion

of the Church, so that no Christian should henceforth have anything to do with him. John's ex-communic-  
tion, 1209. Even for this John did not care. At last, in

1212, when the interdict had lain on the land for four years, the Pope bade Philip of France lead a crusade against John, the enemy of the Church. He also caused it to be publicly declared that John was no longer king, and that the English owed him no obedience.

4. In the end John seemed to grow afraid; he could not trust his people, and he knew that Philip was very strong.

John's sub-  
mission,  
1213. He was very superstitious too, and was much frightened by hearing that it had been prophesied that on the next Feast of the Ascension he would no longer be king. His terror seems to have been quite abject. He gave up at once every point for which he had been struggling. He accepted Stephen Langton as archbishop, and promised to give back the money which he had plundered from the churches. To humble himself utterly he gave up his crown to the Pope and took it back again, doing homage for it as if he were the Pope's vassal. He also promised to pay a fixed sum of money as tribute to Rome every year.

This act filled the people with disgust. They did not like to see their country so humbled before Rome, and the general dislike and distrust of John grew greater every day.

## CHAPTER II.

## JOHN'S QUARREL WITH HIS BARONS.

1. THE barons were beginning to complain very much of the way in which John treated them. All through his reign they had been most heavily taxed. Several times he had bidden them bring together <sup>John and</sup> <sup>the barons.</sup> their forces to follow him to war, and then had made no use of them. The northern barons took the lead in complaining. They were not the men who had sprung from the great Norman families of the Conquest, and who had so often fought against the king for power. They were humbler men, who had grown into importance later, and who till now had been always faithful to the king.

In 1213 John's faithful minister, Geoffrey FitzPeter, who had long been Justiciar, died. He had done his best to keep peace between his master and the barons, and to provoke the barons as little as possible, whilst he did John's bidding. With him John quite lost his hold upon the barons; but the king felt no sorrow for the death of his faithful servant. He was glad to have lost him, because it left him free to oppress the people as he liked. When he heard of Geoffrey's death he exclaimed, 'When he arrives in hell he may go and salute Hubert Walter, for by the feet of God now for the first time am I King and Lord of England.'

The new Justiciar was Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, a native of Poitou, and the barons did not like the choice of a foreigner.

2. John had for long planned a great attack upon Philip of France. He had allied himself with the Em-

peror and the Count of Flanders, and hoped that together they would be able to crush Philip. When his quarrel with the Pope was settled, he called upon the barons to follow him to France and help him to win back the lands he had lost there. The northern barons refused. They said they were not bound to follow the king out of England. At a great council held at St. Albans for the sake of settling Church matters, the barons and the clergy spent much time in talking about the state of the country and the abuses of the government. The same talk went on in another council held in London soon after. In this the lead was taken by Stephen Langton. He was a true lover of his country, and tried in every way to help the people and bring back order and good government. He had tried speaking to John about the abuses of his rule, but found that it did no good. He was now willing to help the barons to force the king to reform.

3. John was enraged when the barons refused to follow him in his French war, and when he saw how they and the clergy were banded together against him. But he felt that it was no good doing anything to punish them then. He made up his mind to go abroad first and make war upon Philip. He trusted that he would gain a great victory and easily win back Normandy. Afterwards, crowned with success, he would come back to England and punish the barons for their disobedience. Meanwhile, too, he hoped to get time to part his enemies, either by threats or bribes, so that there might not be so strong a party against him in the country.

4. Philip of France was attacked by many enemies at once, and was in great danger, but this danger roused his subjects to defend their king. At the battle of Bouvines, on the northern frontier of France, he defeated a great army made up of Germans,

Opposition  
to John.

War with  
France.

Battle of  
Bouvines,  
1214.



Flemish, and English. John was in Anjou at the time. When he heard of the battle of Bouvines he saw that all was lost, and that he should be able to do nothing against Philip.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### STRUGGLE FOR THE GREAT CHARTER.

1. WHILEST John was away the barons and clergy had met together again. Stephen Langton had brought to their notice the charter which Henry I. had given the people. It promised just the good government which they wanted, and made their cause stronger by giving them something clear to ask and fight for. The barons swore that unless John would give them a sealed charter, granting them their laws and liberties, they would make war on him till they made him do so. They agreed at once to begin to get a force together to help them in their struggle with the king. They had little hope that they should be able to get anything from him except by force.

In all this the clergy, with Langton at their head, were quite at one with the barons. John hoped to be able to part the Church and the barons. To do this he granted the Church the privileges which it had long asked for. But it was of no use. Langton was too true a lover of liberty to be bribed to forsake the people's cause.

2. John went on trying to put off the struggle. He took the vow of the Crusade, that none might dare to take up arms against him. But the barons were not frightened. They got their army together and met at a place called Brackley, in Northampton-

shire. The clergy had not, of course, taken up arms, and had not been forced to break with the king outwardly. The archbishop, therefore, was one of the men whom John sent to ask the barons what they wanted. He came back with a long list of their demands, which John in anger refused.

Then the barons marched to London, and the Londoners greeted them with joy. This was not, like the revolts of the barons which we have spoken about before, a struggle to gain power for themselves. It was a struggle to get good government for the whole country, for the people as well as the barons. Everyone left John, even the men of his court and household. The whole country was against the king, who had shown himself to be nothing but a brutal tyrant.

3. John was at last obliged to bid the barons meet Runnymede, 1215. him at Runnymede, that they might talk together about their demands and come to some agreement.

Runnymede was a meadow through which the Thames ran, between Windsor and Staines. On one side of the river the barons spread out their forces and put up their tents. On the other side was the king. On an island in the middle of the river, the messengers from either side met and discussed the disputed points.

John, deserted on all sides, was ready to grant anything that was asked, though probably he did not mean to keep his promises. In one day he agreed to the Charter which the barons proposed, and put his seal to it.

4. This charter, which is so important in the history of English liberty that it has always been called *The Great Charter*, was as it were a treaty between the king and his people. In it the interests of the people were considered side by side with the interests of the barons. This is the important point

to mark about it, that for the first time the whole nation, and not only one class in it, rose against the king to fight for its liberties.

5. Till now we have always seen the people on the side of the king against the barons. Now the nation had become one. The Normans and the English were one people: they felt that they had Union of the nation. the same interests, and that they could get on best by working together.

Under Henry I. and Henry II. the barons had learnt that it was useless trying to get power for themselves, like the great barons in France; and the people had learnt what good government was. The order that had reigned all over the country had educated the people. They had learnt what law was, what good government was. They had seen the Church resist the king with success even when he seemed most powerful, and from this they had learnt that they too might struggle for their liberty. So it came about that the nation met the king at Runnymede and forced him to put his seal to the Great Charter. The barons in no way acted selfishly, and we do not see in the Great Charter that they tried at all to get new power for themselves.

6. The Great Charter was very like the Charter of Henry I. The barons had taken that charter for their model. But the Great Charter went farther Articles of the Charter. than that had done, for since its day many new rights and new claims had sprung up, and now all these had to be thought of.

First of all the Great Charter promised to the Church all its rights, and said clearly that the English Church was to be free. Then it went on to promise that the king would not go beyond his feudal rights in the treatment of his vassals, and would not use unlawful means to get money from them.

7. Its most important articles are those in which the king promised that he would not try to raise money from the nation by a scutage or other aid without the consent of the Great Council. To this council were to be called by name all the great clergy, the earls, and the greater barons. The lesser barons were to be summoned generally in a writ which was to be sent to the sheriff of their shire. This is important, because it clearly states that the consent of the council was to be given to all taxes, and also states how the Great Council was to be made up. There was nothing new in it, but it had never been put so clearly before. To have the means by which they could hope to govern themselves so clearly put, must have been a great help in the future progress of the people towards liberty.

8. Legal abuses were also put right by the Great Charter. John had got together a great deal of money by laying very heavy fines upon offending persons. This was now forbidden, and the old order was brought back into the Exchequer and the Curia Regis.

An end was put to some of the forest abuses. The forests that John had made were to be destroyed, and all the bad customs of the forest law were to be done away with.

One great rule was clearly laid down, that no free man was to be taken and in any way punished save by judgment of his *peers*, or equals, or by the law of the land.

Twenty-five barons were to be chosen by the whole number of barons to see that the charter was carried out. If the king would not hearken to what they said to him, they might make war upon him, so as to force him to observe the Charter.

9. John had signed the Charter because he could not

help himself. He did so with rage in his heart, and rode away from Windsor as soon as he could to see how he could find means to resist the barons.

This time the Pope was on his side. John <sup>John's last struggle.</sup>

had made himself Innocent III.'s vassal, and he was now rewarded by Innocent's help. Innocent sent letters to England, in which he said that he looked upon the Charter as unlawful and put it aside, whilst he bade Stephen Langton no longer act as archbishop. Then he went on to excommunicate the barons, but they were not frightened by this, but clung to their cause.

John hired troops from abroad, and both sides got ready for war; for the barons soon saw that John did not mean to keep the Charter. But the king's troops were the strongest, for they were trained to fight as their business in life. The barons turned to France for help. They offered the crown of England to Lewis, eldest son of King Philip.

10. Lewis and the barons together were too strong for John. He was marching southwards to try and save Dover, which held out for him, when, as he crossed the Wash, the tide rose suddenly and <sup>Death of John, 1216.</sup> carried away the baggage of the army, with the royal treasure. This was a bitter blow to the king, who loved money dearly. Soon after he was seized with a fever, which was made much worse by the greed with which he partook of a great banquet. He died at Newark, in October 1216, just three months after the death of Pope Innocent III.

During his life he had never tried to serve God, and had always scoffed at His name. On his deathbed fear seized him, and he gave orders that he was to be buried in the habit of a monk, as if he hoped that religion, which he had scorned during his life, would protect him after his death.

We cannot pity him even for his miserable end, but can only feel that he deserved it all. As he had loved no one and been true to no one, we cannot wonder that none loved or clung to him. He was left alone, because his utter selfishness and meanness made all men shrink from him. 'Foul as it is, hell itself is defiled by the fouler presence of John,' are the terrible words that men of his time spoke of him. They have told us nothing which can make us think less harshly of him.

II. It is not hard to see what a great change had come over England since the days of William the Conqueror. Under Henry II. we have seen how **Summary.** the Normans and English had become one people; and we have seen how, under John, barons, Church, and people learned that they all had the same interests, and wanted good government and order.

The Norman kings had taught them to value good government, and now they would not do without it. But the Great Charter marks the beginning of a new change. It shows us that the people had begun to wish for some share in the government themselves. They had learned their strength, and did not mean any longer to put up with such a harsh rule as that of the Norman kings had been. In the years that follow you will see how the people learned to govern themselves.

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